

TSIETSI

**A stage adaptation of
Lukas Mkuti's novella by the same title**

**Written by
Ola-Kris**

CHARACTERS

According to appearance

Pregnant Woman
Old Tsietsi
Lindiwe
Observer 1
Observer 2
Sifiso
Observer 3
Grandpa
Taxi Driver 1
Taxi Driver 2
Mother
Puseletso
Middle Aged Tsietsi
High School Tsietsi
Teacher
Tsietsi
Cousin
Uncle
Drunk
Pretty Mama
Hawker
Lady
Drunk Teacher
1st Drunk
2nd Drunk
Friend
Man
Principal
Judge
3 Couples

Below is the list of characters as well as the names of actors/actresses who premiered TSIETSI at the NCH of the University of Limpopo, South Africa from 4th to 13th May, 2017.

CHARACTER S	Names of Artist	Name of Artist	Name of Artist	Name of Artist	Name of Artist	Name of Artist
Pregnant Woman	SETE L.M	PHUKUBYE P.M	SELALA H	MABUZA P	MABASO N.D	MPEBE K.N.P
Old Tsietsi	MAPHOTO L.M	LEGODI S	MOSHOKA K			
Lindiwe	LETSOALO S.F	MAPONYA K.S	MOSELAKGOMO M.M	NTHLAMU T.M		
Observer 1	SEKGOTLABORASA M	MACHETE D	NDLOVU F	KGATLE L.F	MBEWE T.I	
Observer 2	MASOGA D	MABASO N.N	SEERANE M			
Sifiso	MOLOTO E	MPIKA C.W				
Observer 3	NGOBENI G	MAFOKOANE F	MOKGOPO L	KGATLE V	MHLANGA R	
Grandpa	RAMOBA K	MPHAHLELE M	RASEMANA L.T	MACHABA M		
Taxi Driver 1	MABOTJA M	PHUTLA L.C				
Taxi Driver 2	MAAKE C	MOKHODI A.K	SHONGWE B			
Mother	SETE L.M	PHUKUBYE P.M	SELALA H	MABUZA P	MABASO N.D	
Puseletso	CHOMA M.R	MASWIKENG L	KGATLE L.V			
Middle Aged Tsietsi	MAGORO T	MALULEKE T	BALOYI T.W	MOSHOKA K	HLUNGWANI W	
High School Tsietsi	MOKWATLO P	NDLOVU L	NDOVE E	CHAWANE F	SENABOYO C.S	
Teacher	CHAWANE F	MOKWATLO P.M	NDOVE F	NKOSI B		
Tsietsi	RAMOTLHOLA M	LEGODI S				
Cousin	LETSOALO M.A	LETSOALO S.F	MOTHIBE M.O	MOLEPO S.M		
Uncle	MALULEKE K.C	NDLOVU L.M				
Drunk						
Pretty Mama	MALATJI D	MAEPA C	MASOGA D	MOGASHOA M.S	MSISINYANE S	
Hawker	MASIAKWALA G	MAKGOANE K.P	THOBESANE T.L	LEBOHO M.D		
Lady	MOSELAKGOMO M.M	NGOBONI M	CHAWANE M.D	MAWELELE K.D	MALATJIH.M	
Drunk Teacher	MOTHOMOGOLO S	CHAWANE F				
1 st Drunk	MAKUNGU M	MBETSE M				
2 nd Drunk	NDOVE E					
Friend	KGOSANA B	DIBETSO M.A	MABUZA P	NKOSI B		
Man	TLOOKE M.J	MALAMBE S.C	MOSEAMEDI D			
Principal	MBUYANE A	LECHELELE S.N	NKOSI B	MOGORU K.M.M		
Judge	RASEMANA L.T	TLOKE M.J	MOKWENA M.P			
Girl	JELE K.N.P					
First Woman	DUBE Z.H	MOKOFANE T	SELALA T	MOABELO L.M.H	MOKGOPO L	
Second Woman	SEERANE M	MALATJI U.N	THEMA M.A	TSHIA B.P	GADEBE P	
Third Woman	SITHOLE M	MASWIKENG M	MOKWENA M.P	MOTLHALOGA T	CHILOMO S.P	
Fourth Woman	RAKUMA S	MNISI A	APHANE M.P	MOLOKOMME M	THOBESANE T.L	

1ST MOVEMENT

The setting of this play is somewhere in rural South Africa. Far left sits a shebeen. On far right is Madithunya's home, a shack. Play opens with a choreographed dance in different parts of a very busy street. All sorts of people, traders, students, travelers are busy doing their things. Old Tsietsi, an old fellow in his late 50s, concludes his dealings with a seller-client. He observes a heavily pregnant woman standing with someone who appears like her father, apparently, waiting anxiously to catch a taxi to the hospital. The woman appears to be experiencing labour pains. We here sounds of thunder, we see lightning and the signs of coming rain. The labouring woman exclaims.....The dancing continues and then.....

PREGNANT WOMAN:

Arrgghhh!!!!!!!!!!

CROWD: (Shout out aloud)

"TSIETSI"!!!

OLD TSIETSI: (Shouts out aloud)

My people!

CROWD:

What?

LINDIWE:

Madala!

OLD TSIETSI:

Yes, yes, yes. You see, you must hear this story; my story actually. This is that story which had severally been told more hthan often.

CROWD:

Hun, hun!

OLD TSIETSI:

When Mother felt excruciating pains which was a matter of life and death. She needed to be rushed to the nearest government hospital very quickly.

CROWD:

Hun, hun!

OLD TSIETSI:

I remember now as if it was last night.

OBSERVER 1:

(Very hysterical) Somebody, call an ambulance quickly!

OBSERVER 2:

(Tries to make a call) Eish! *(moves hither and thither)* Nonsense! No signal on my freaking phone.

CROWD:

Eish!

LINDIWE:

Forget it!

OBSERVER 1:

Forget what?

LINDIWE:

Forget ambulance. She won't make it.

SIFISO:

What is that and how could you even say such a thing?

LINDIWE: *(makes to move to Sifiso)* Yeah, I said it. Forget ambulance. Now deal with that.

SIFISO:

You are wicked.

CROWD:

Hun, hun! *(someone from the crowd moves towards Lindiwe, as if to check her out if she is truly wicked)*

LINDIWE:

You are a moron.

CROWD:

Eish! *(someone from the crowd moves towards Lindiwe, as if to check her out if she is a truly a moron)*

SIFISO:

You are a dog.

CROWD:

What?

LINDIWE:

Yes, a dog is what you are. You must really be feeling bad hey. Is it because I left you for your best friend? Oh goodness me...he does it better. Sorry.

CROWD:

Oh shem! *(someone quickly runs to give a tissue to Sifiso. Sifiso kicks the fellow away. Everyone laughs and jeers)*

SIFISO:

(Very unsure) You are not my type.

OBSERVER 1: *(Very hysterical)* Somebody, call an ambulance quickly!

OBSERVER 2: *(Tries to make a call)* Eish! *(moves hither and thither)* Nonsense! No signal on this stupid phone.

OBSERVER 3: Stolen phone.

OBSERVER 1: *(Very disturbed by the careless attitudes around)* Retreat from this nonsense everyone. Someone needs to get to the hospital fast. We need an ambulance.

LINDIWE:

Ambulances are not for rural dwellers.

OBSERVER 1:

Call a taxi *(He rushes to observe the laboring woman, and then, to no one in particular)* get a taxi idiot.

LINDIWE:

Idiot? Who's that?

CROWD: *(Point fingers to one another)*

OLD TSIETSI:

A taxi was arranged to take her to the nearest government hospital.

(Presently, someone in the crowd runs out and shortly returns with a taxi. The taxi driver, a bully of a man, is approached by OLD TSIETSI).

OLD TSIETSI:

But then my grandfather *(he goes to pitifully observe the old man and the taxi driver who are now having a conversation)* My grandfather. See, he didn't have the taxi fare.

GRANDPA: *(Pleads with the taxi driver)* Please I will pay you next week when one of my sons, who works in Kimberley, sends me money.

TAXI DRIVER: *(With a tone of finality)* Read what's written on the back of the car.

OLD TSIETSI: My grandfather went to the back of the vehicle to inspect it and saw a sticker on the bumper.

GRANDPA: *(He reads out loudly)* I GIVE A LOT OF CREDIT, MARA TOMORROW – SALA HANTLE.

OLD TSIETSI: But my grandfather pleaded.....

GRANDPA: Please, you'll get your money next week. See, my son, see *(he reaches for a photograph from his jacket's inner pocket and flashes the photo as if it is an ID)*, he works in one of the good companies in Kimberley. I am sure the money will come next week. Please, help us. Let our hearts see the light, please. My daughter needs urgent help.

OLD TSIETSI: The taxi-driver ignored my grandfather's pleas. He got into his taxi and lifted up dust as he sped away.

GRANDPA: *(Speaks angrily at the gone driver)* Let that car organize your funeral when you die. Wicked soul! You can't take pity on other suffering human beings. Voetsek!

(At this point, the CROWD begins a song about Apartheid like "Senze ni na". GRANDPA weeps while some people console him)

OLD TSIETSI: And guess who takes the fall.

CROWD: Apartheid!

(The crowd continues to sing Senze ni na...)

OLD TSIETSI: *(Angrily)* Wipe out that sound!

GRANDPA:

Why must we continue to heap blames on our past? See what it has turned you into. *(He screams at the direction of the taxi)* Has apartheid also made you inhuman to fellow humans? Borrow yourself some brains, idiot!

OLD TSIETSI: *(Goes to observe the pregnant woman who is in pains)* Meanwhile, Madithunya was drenched in sweat and tears. The pains were attacking her like thunder attacks the sky.

(Another taxi drives in)

OLD TSIETSI

Luckily, another taxi came, an old thing on four wheels, more of a danger than anything else. A coffin, in actual fact! But what does it matter. They needed transport, period.

(Grandpa, moves close to the driver and, in hush tones, discusses payment with the driver)

GRANDPA: *(speaks louder)* Yes of course I promise you. If you do not trust my words, at least you will give the benefit of the doubt to my grey hairs.

TAXI DRIVER 2: "Give the benefit of the doubt to my grey hairs". Do grey hairs pay for petrol and vehicle maintenance?

GRANDPA:

Will I run away with your money?

TAXI DRIVER 2:

I have heard that question before.

GRANDPA:

Will I run away with your money?

TAXI DRIVER:

Well, it is only you who thinks you will not. Nobody sees your heart.

OLD TSIETSI:

The taxi-man accepted to get his money in two weeks' time. Madithunya was rushed into the taxi. The taxi-driver, an old man with glasses as old as the face on which they sat, drove as fast as he could. It was an emergency. But as he tried to negotiate a sharp corner, the car skidded and lost control and headed towards a herd of sheep grazing near the roadside. The car ploughed into the sheep killing two instantly. By only a thread of time, the car had missed the shepherd, a young man holding an elephant of a club in his hands. The taxi-driver came out trembling like a tree in a windstorm. Before he inspected the damage to his car, the shepherd dashed forward, and without saying a single word - not even a lame greeting - raised his flaming club and landed it on the man's back. The taxi-driver's face glowed with pain as he smashed the ground. He hollered more like a baby who had been dug by a doctor's injection. The shepherd went on to sit on the man and fenced him with barbed wires of blows.

(Somewhere from inside the car, screams Madithunya, the pregnant woman)

MADITHUNYA:

Eish!!! Mother, Puseletso.

OLD TIETSI:

My grandfather had two situations to take care of. Both important, both urgent, both life-threatening, both confusing and both out of his reach. The taxi driver had his arm fractured and, consequently, couldn't drive.

TAXI DRIVER 2:

You drive the car, I can't. That *ninja* broke my arm.

GRANDPA:

Eish! I don't know how to drive.

OLD TIETSI:

The two men looked at each other's empty faces. Time was defeating them. The taxi driver was also being defeated by consuming flames of pain.

(Suddenly, we hear the cries of a new born baby)

OLD TSIETSI

Then the ear-piercing cries of a baby were heard from the car. The two men looked at each other without uttering a word.

PUSELETSO:

Viva! Viva! It's a boy!
(*She hululates animatedly*).

OLD TIETSI:

More tears flowed freely down the taxi-driver's wrinkled face. (*OLD TIETSI hands the driver a face towel*) Pain was pounding him like a hammer. My grandfather was caught in half with confusion. He had not a clue of what to do next.

(*A Song celebrating a new life comes on*).

Lights out

2ND MOVEMENT

MIDDLE AGED TSIETSI: *(25 years old)*

(Pointing at the direction of the mother and child)

That is the story of my miserable birth. In a little bush, in my village! Yes, these were the circumstances surrounding my birth. Over the years I had been reminded of this incident now and again. Since it was repeated many times, I knew every single detail. I can even tell you how many clouds stood above us and show you the spot the sun was at the time, plus the direction of the wind.

(Everyone in this scene begins to exit stage)

The years passed and I grew healthy, but my life was never free of troubles. The name I was given declared it all. They named me, Tsietsi, which means a package of trouble.

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI: *(16 years old):* At school, I was an average learner, but my life was filled with actions which didn't please my teachers and they hated me full circle because of that.

(Presently, some learners appear on stage in high school uniforms. The learners are relishing their break time. HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI moves to interrupt their play as one of the female learners rest her head on his laps while HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI strokes her hair. An alarm sounds to announce the end of break time)

TEACHER: *(Addresses the learners)* And are you not all aware that your break time is over?

(Learners gets up rather lazily and walk away. HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI sits, unperturbed)

.
And you, are you deaf or something? Educators are here to teach and not fix your cracked head.

(The educator reaches for HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI and pulls him by his ears to his sit in the classroom)

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI: These educators always said that nonsense to me at the slightest provocation. Believe me, if I was born earlier I would be the teacher and that goat will be my student.

Lights out

3RD MOVEMENT

(Class is taking place here with HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI'S in attendance. He steps out of the class to act)

MIDDLE AGED TSIETSI:

When I was a lad of fifteen years old and in Grade 9, I rocked my classroom. One day I found a snake lying on the road. Someone had killed it. I learnt later that it was a small python. I looked for a sharp rock. I cut the snake's head, took an old newspaper, wrapped the head, and put it in my schoolbag. Off to school I continued. In the middle of a maths class I asked the teacher to excuse me.

(He speaks to the teacher)

Sir, may I please go to the bathroom?

TEACHER:

Get out quietly and don't disturb my class.

MIDDLE AGED TSIETSI:

I was duly excused. As I was walking towards the door, I dropped the deadly head on the floor

(High school Tsietsi drops the snake's head, everyone ran helter skelter, screaming and wailing. Some students escaped through the windows)

MIDDLE AGED TSIETSI:

Pandemonium broke out. I didn't imagine it would be that exciting. Learners from the neighboring classes also spilled out of their classrooms when they saw my classmates running away for their dear lives. Later, I was identified as the "witch" who had brought the dangerous head. I was asked to explain my action. Although I was an average learner, my life was filled with actions which didn't please my teachers and they hated me full circle because of that.

TEACHER: *(In annoyance)*

Tsietsi, where did you get the head?

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

It's not my head, *meneer*

MIDDLE AGED TSIETSI:

I answered, afraid of the consequences of my action.

TEACHER:

Idiot! I know it is not your head because you are not a snake. I am asking where you got it. Who gave it to you and for what purpose?

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

I am not the one who brought it to school, *meneer*.

TEACHER:

So, fine, who brought it to school?

(Everyone in class points at HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI)

TEACHER:

But all your classmates' fingers are pointing at you. Are you telling me that they're all liars?

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

They're liars like Satan, *meneer*.

(The teacher dragged him to the open, searched his pockets. He found no evidence. He reached for his schoolbag and found an old crumpled newspaper soaked in blood)

TEACHER:

What is this?

(Teacher reaches for HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI and drags him by his cheek)

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

Eish! Meneer, you are hurting me.

TEACHER: That is the idea

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

Eish!!!!!! I am dead.

TEACHER:

Not yet, you little poisonous witch. My intention is to kill you.

OLD TSIETSI:

He roared as he released his grip on my now twisted face. I knew he was leading me to an abattoir. I needed a full tank of courage and bravery.

TEACHER:

Listen, little rascal, this is a school. Not a *sangoma* training kindergarten. Do your ears hear me? We have so many grinding problems in this school because of robots like you who bring dark forces here. This kid is a night walker, I am telling you. Everything is written on the wall of his face.

OLD TSIETSI:

I thought he'd finished with me. He pulled a whip. One! I felt a bee-sting. Two, four, six.....The whips wiped all my senses. An excruciating pain crawled all over me. I let out a piercing cry.

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

Wa mpolaya meneer!

TEACHER:

Exactly! That is the idea. Die! This world will be better without you. Die!

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

I want to pee

OLD TSIETSI:

I announced shamelessly. But the wise teacher would not hear me out.

TEACHER:

Go ahead and water the garden of your hellish life right here.

OLD TSIETSI:

I was now wet, literally, but I felt like a fish in a desert. Luckily, I slid out of his hands. He tried to trip me, but I jumped like a springbok and his concrete legs missed me. Now picture a chicken whose head has been decapitated. How does it run? That's how I ran, looking for looking for sanity. I sped off not without revenge. I hurled at him a set of choice vocabulary from the dictionary of a pit latrine. For two weeks I had to clean my classroom and four others before school and after school. And, I had to visit his office daily, for the rest of the term to receive a scolding or two from his running mouth.

MIDDLE AGED TSIETSI

With or without punishment, I just could not stop my wayward ways. No day passed without me getting into some kind of trouble, either with my teachers or my fellow learners. Trouble seemed to be in me. I was born for it. One thing really sent electric currents to my heart. I didn't know who my father was.

A song about family, paternity is raised.

Lights out.

4TH MOVEMENT

(Mother is busy washing dishes. Tietsi is busy with some home - work)

TSIETSI:

Mother. Mother, can you hear me.

MOTHER:

Speak. I am not deaf.

TIETSI:

I am troubled.

MOTHER:

Everyone is usually troubled about something.

TSIETSI:

Mummy I am serious. I am troubled.

MOTHER:

Why is that strange? Tell me something new.

TSIETSI:

My case is an exception. It troubles me greatly. I do not trouble it, but it troubles me.

MOTHER:

What troubles you my son?

TSIETSI:

When my friends would talk about their fathers doing this and that, my mouth would be sealed. I'd just give the ceiling a blank look.

MOTHER:

God is your father, son. Seek no other.

TSIETSI:

Of course, like everyone, God is my Father. But I need to know the other father, the one I would be able to touch.

MOTHER:

Hnmmm! Oh I see. Interesting!

TSIETSI:

Yes, mother. Sometimes my friends would talk about their fathers to just make me feel bad.

MOTHER:

And how then do you feel?

TSIETSI:

Of course I feel bad a lot.

MOTHER:

Really?

TSIETSI:

Yes. Someone told me the other children even had a nickname for me. No-father. What a no name!

MOTHER:

Is that your name?

TSIETSI:

No mother. My name is Tietsi.

MOTHER:

That is all you must focus on, son.

TSIETSI:

But what if they still call me “no-father”?

MOTHER: Then, that is their problem my son.

TSIETSI:

But it bothers me mum. It bugs me a lot.

MOTHER:

Then, that is your own problem.

TSIETSI:

But I am confused. For example, is he, my father, tall? Short? Fat? Thin? Dark? Light? Handsome? Ugly? Why have you refused to even tell me what my father looks like?

MOTHER:

That is my own problem my son.

TSIETSI:

But mother, I need to know him, to touch him, to talk to him.

MOTHER:

Well, if your curiosity must be massaged, your father lives in, that is assuming that he is still alive. He lives in Phuthaditjhaba and De Aar. Sometimes in Mpangeni or Soweto. Other times he lives in eManzimtoti or in Bisho.

TSIETSI:

He seems to live just about everywhere. But why does he not come home?

MOTHER:

That is his problem.

TIETSI:

Has he got another family there?

MOTHER: (Silence).

TSIETSI:

I want to go and live with him.

MOTHER:

Now, that is.....

TSIETSI:

My own problem, right?

MOTHER:

His wife will beat you up black and blue every day (*Mother goes inside the house*)

TSIETSI:

So he has a wife? Why did he leave you and why will he not stay here with us?

MOTHER:

Stupid question! Put off the stove.

TSIETSI:

So, he lives here and there and everywhere. Is he a truck driver, perhaps?

MOTHER: (*from off stage*)

Put the stove off.

TSIETSI:

(*Tietsi makes to obey and begins to speak very loud so his mother off stage would hear*)

But truck drivers come back home even if it is once a year or once in two years. Why does he just abandon me, us?

MOTHER:

(*Shouts from inside the house*) That is his problem.

A song is raised

Lights out.

5TH MOVEMENT

OLD TIETSI:

Nothing happened. For a while, I thought that my grandfather was my father. The world, my world, was spinning on the axis of confusion. But I saw my mother in the company of a number of men. The men would buy me sweets or toys and they would buy Mother beer. Sometimes Mother would go with them for days on end. My grandmother would be the one taking care of me. My only problem at home, though, was my uncle, Thabo. He was sand in my eyes. I hated him so wickedly. In fact, if I had any magical power, I'd give him the head of a warhog and make him walk in that head in the village day and night. The only thing he knew exceptionally well was to pound me into curry paste. He would take his soldier belt off his pants and he would then shred me to pieces with it. He would put a piece of cloth in my mouth to suppress my cries. One day he almost delivered me at heaven's door. Yes, they found me half dead. Even after this incident, the beatings didn't stop. Mother would not listen to my cries. She'd say.

MOTHER:

"If we don't beat you, you will grow to be like a cow or a stray dog. We are raising you to be a responsible person. You are being taught.

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

But at school they teach us and we barely get beaten

MOTHER:

And that is the reason why children know nothing these days. You send them to the shop to buy you snuff they bring you ZamBuk. Learning and beating go hand in hand, my boy. That's the only way you can get discipline from children. They say if you don't beat a child you'll spoil his bread. Exactly!

OLD TSIETSI:

My uncle was my darkness, and sadness.

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

And when are the beatings going to stop?

MOTHER:

When you grow a beard!

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI

When I grow a beard?

MOTHER:

Exactly!

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

That is ridiculous

MOTHER:

That is what they all say.

OLD TSIETSI:

I wanted to have a beard right there in front of her, for everyone to see, and respect me. I wanted some hair on my chest too. I was tired of being treated like a racing horse. One day, though, my uncle became a very good friend of mine. I just had to love him. He was everything to me in the world. He brought a lot of meat home. For the whole week our house was a house of meat. If you saw anyone of us chewing, for sure it was meat. I enjoyed that meat more than I can say. In the morning if you saw any member of my family with their hand in the mouth, they were not brushing their teeth. It was meat they were enjoying. My uncle had told us that it was *nama ya tholo*. He said he found a limping impala dragging itself to nowhere. My uncle followed it, punching it with his bare hands until it fell. The rest is history. That week he was the hero of the family. Everybody treated him with extra respect and care. He was the meat-man.

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

Thobela. Lekae ntate. Moshate.

OLD TSIETSI:

I would greet him several times a day. He suddenly became fragile. He became a Prince. Temporarily, he was a breadwinner.

(We see the family relishing meat)

OLD TSIETSI:

After a week had passed, the police came to our house looking for my uncle. They said he was being suspected of stealing a cow. Everybody at home knew then that we were not eating *nama ya tholo*, but, stolen meat.

(We see the police coming in to search with a warrant and retrieve bones)

OLD TSIETSI:

They didn't find my uncle, but the police found some bones lying here and there. After two years my uncle re-appeared, with tales of his one-year old baby named Murhandziwa who lives with the mother in Burgersfort. After a day or two he was gone. He called us a month later to say that he was in Kwa Mashu in Kwa Zulu Natal. He became like the wind, here and there.

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

We didn't have much to eat at home. Sometimes we'd eat pap and milk Monday to Monday to Monday. For breakfast we'd eat porridge and rotten potatoes that some kind farmers donated to us. Sometimes we'd eat porridge and tea. Sometimes we added sugar to our tea, sometimes salt, sometimes nothing at all. Sometimes the wind would be our only porridge. And our home was a perennial home of leaves. We would eat *morogo* and cabbage forever and a day. No, we were not vegetarians. We were vegetables. My grandfather, shame, depended on money from one of my uncles living in Kimberley, but sometimes six months would pass without any cent dropping his way. Sometimes money would come only at Christmas. And when money came, it would still not be much, and besides, half of it would be used to buy beer.

OLD TSIETSI:

When my uncle went away I was much relieved. The beatings didn't stop, however, but they were far less, and far less bestial. I wondered if he'd have done the same had my father been around. But, I was fatherless, No-father, as the kids called me secretly, and my uncle beat me square like someone who had no father. My heart used to be sore all the time when he was around. When my name was called for anything, the first thought was a beating. I told myself that these people knew how my shit smelled, but they didn't have to treat me as if I didn't wash. Was I that rotten?

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

I remember one day one of my distant female cousins visited us. She was of my age.

(Endless Love song by Lionel Richie and Diana Ross comes through the loud speakers. COUSIN appears on stage as High School Tsietsi goes on with his lines)

OLD TSIETSI:

Oh goodness me! The girl was an angel straight from the skies. She had all round musical beauty: perfectly dark and altogether lovely. Everything she carried was perfect. Her front, her back, down, up. So, I invited her to the back of the house one evening when it was a little dark. I told her I was going to teach her a new fine game. It was a kissing game that I had seen some children play. One, two, three. The game was on. My cousin looked at me. Her eyes dilated and opened up like a blossom. I could see a smooth smile embroidering her face.

(They both kiss passionately)

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSII:

I told you it's a nice game.

COUSIN:

Hun hunmm.....let us do it again.

(The kissed again more intensely. As they begin to carefully undress. Cousin removes her undies to the knees while Tsietsi removes it altogether and wears it like a cap)

MIDDLE AGED TSIETSI:

I felt, in my heart an energy that was so solid. I lifted her up and with sweet enthusiasm. As I was about to kiss her again, danger suddenly appeared in the sky like a bolt of lightning.

(Uncle appears from no-where, Tsietsi sees him and freezes)

I didn't move a muscle. I was stunned, torn, crushed.

(HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI tries to run)

He tripped me. I fell and was then at his mercy. Caught red-handed! I had full knowledge of what was coming. I also knew what I didn't know was coming.

UNCLE:

You romantic worm, now you want to get married?

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

No, Uncle

UNCLE:

Yes, you do. What were you doing here?

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

I was just blowing sand off her eyes.

UNCLE:

Is the sand also in her mouth?

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

No uncle. I was checking if her teeth are complete.

UNCLE:

Oh, I see. You are now a dentist?

(Uncle goes near to inspect what he has on his head)

And what is that on your head?

(Removes the undies, checks it thoroughly and smells it)

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

It's a.....cricket cap uncle.

UNCLE:

So, you don't know you can't marry your cousin?

MIDDLE AGED TSIETSI:

He shook me violently and blanketed me with beatings. I managed to escape with my life intact.

A song is raised.

(Back to his mother's shack. High School Tsietsi peeps from the window and addresses his Uncle)

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

I have told everybody you wet the bed at night. All the girls know and nobody will marry you. *Bel ek is nie vir hulle nie. Blek sie es.* The last time you took a shower was five years ago. You're a walking dead skunk.

MIDDLE AGED TSIETSI:

I was surprised he said nothing.

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

And you will never have children.

MIDDLE AGED TSIETSI:

I was wordy and ringing like a wind chime. An exercise of catharsis, really! I was terrorising and tenderising him into nothing because, to be honest, he was nothing.

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

You're a flashlight with no battery. You cannot father a child because you have a mini, I mean micro something.

MIDDLE AGED TSIETSI:

Still, silence on his part, but taking in every taunt.

Lights out!

6TH MOVEMENT

(It is night and the home of Mother is lighted like a bar. Mother comes in with a man from outside with bottles of liquor and goes inside the shack, ignoring Tietsi. Soon after, we see a silhouette of a couple making out inside of Mother's shack)

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

You see, I was under this illusion that every man who came to visit Mother was my father. These men came when they were drunk. Sometimes they'd vomit and Mother would immediately make me clean them up.

MOTHER:

(Raising her voice from within)

See, you have vomited. You are such a pathetic goat.

DRUNK:

Let us go another round again!

MOTHER:

(Screaming from inside in silhouette)

Tsietsi!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

Ma!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I hated that payless job. But one day I paid myself big time.

MIDDLE AGED TSIETSI:

One day, as I was dusting up this certain man, I touched something hard in his trousers. That something was in his pockets. It was a wallet. I looked into it to see what it contained. Money! It was my pay day. The wallet had lots of cash to buy anything, a donkey, for example. We needed one. I was doing all the donkey work at home, including pushing a wheelbarrow of water and carrying other heavy stuff all day long. In my morning dream, I heard Mother crying. I woke up. She was crying for real. The tall man, I understood, had roughed her up. Her upper lip was red like a ripe tomato. I looked around to see if the man was still around. He was not. I didn't say anything to Mother. I wanted to comfort her, but I didn't know how. I was hurt deep within, but I had no power in my blood to do anything. Besides, the man had gone away already. I now had a crying mother in the house and a sore heart inside of me.

7TH MOVEMENT

MIDDLE AGED TSIETSI:

A woman neighbour came to me one day and said.

PRETTY MAMA:

(In a hush voice)

Tsietsi, come to my house. I want you to do something for me.

MIDDLE AGED TSIETSI:

She is the older person so I didn't even ask what the favour she wanted me to do for her was. I followed her like a lamb to the slaughter. Does she want me to clean her yard? Does she want me to help her with her washing? Does she want me to kill a chicken for her? Well, I followed her footsteps. We entered her house and she motioned me to sit in the sitting room. I did, waiting anxiously.

PRETTY MAMA:

Do you want to drink some water?

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

Em..em....yes, m'am.

MIDDLE AGED TSIETSI:

It was a hot day, but I wasn't thirsty. I said yes only because I was a bit nervous. She disappeared in the kitchen. I heard the clang of pots. I wondered whether she was fixing a meal, or perhaps she wanted me to clear out some food she couldn't finish herself. Like most of you here, I love food. Especially that of the previous day! It has this taste that knocks you out of your senses. Especially beans! I waited; my mouth at the ready and all watery.

MIDDLE AGED TSIETSI:

She called me after some time.

PRETTY MAMA:

Come to the bedroom.

MIDDLE AGED TSIETSI:

At the door, I hesitated a bit.

PRETTY MAMA:

Come right in, sweetie.

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

(Speaks to the audience)

I have never done this before with an older woman. I understand they got experience. What do you think?

(High School Tsietsi enters the bedroom)

MIDDLE AGED TSIETSI:

Wow! I was in a whirlwind of wonder. There she stood in the middle of it all. It was a charming bedroom with a lot of decorations gracing the walls. The aroma was gloriously gorgeous. How I wished it was my bedroom! King sized pillows stacked on it and looking like an open rose, all welcoming to a bee. My heartbeat became faster. I had only *one* pillow with a gaping hole in the middle, even. I couldn't even tell when last its cover had been in water. Did it even have a cover? And, it was as flat as a coin. She had about eight pillows, all nicely full like a fresh grave, with three teddy bears.

PRETTY MAMA:

Sit there

MIDDLE AGED TSIETSI:

She said, motioning me to the bed. I saw her fix the curtains, drawing them in fact. I looked at her as she committed herself to that exercise with swift seriousness. Then she came towards me, her eyes shining straight on my face. We heard a knock on the door. She froze. Not a word in the house. Three minutes went by and only silence hit the air.

PRETTY MAMA:

These beggars

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

Eish!

PRETTY MAMA:

Listen, are you a clever boy?

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

Yes, I even have a big....*(He coughs and hesitates a bit)* a big heart.

PRETTY MAMA:

Do you keep secrets?

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

Yes, Pretty mama. I keep secrets. My friends trust me. I only tell after a long time has passed, about three days or one week.

PRETTY MAMA:

No, no, a secret is not supposed to be divulged at any time. Never! You must keep your secrets to yourself. You don't even tell your best friend. You die with your secrets. You must never tell. Do you hear me?

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

I hear you, mama. This one of today I won't tell, even if they beat me they won't hear anything from my mouth. I'm very clever.

(The woman went to the kitchen again, leaving Tietsi behind. She came back and sat on the bed)

PRETTY MAMA:

Now, come and sit near me here.

(Tietsi sits near her. Licking his lips like a clown, with eyes dropping on the floor, waiting. She slides her hand into her bra . . . and another knock on the door again. She dropped her head in disgust but without opening her mouth)

HAWKER:

We're selling morogo! *(shouted the voice of a little girl. Slowly she removes her blouse gently while Tietsi looks on with excitement. She tries to retrieve something from her bra but couldn't. She turns to Tietsi)*

PRETTY MAMA:

(She calls out softly). Tietsi

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

Mmm, eh, Pretty mama.

(Again, she slides her hand into her bra)

PRETTY MAMA:

I like you, you're a good boy. Look at you, handsome cute thing. Now listen.

(Tsietsi's eyes were all trying to look and not to look. She dug something under her bra)

PRETTY MAMA:

Come closer.

(She gives him a soft knock on the head with a closed fist. His head falls sideways in response).

PRETTY MAMA:

(She unfolded A-4 paper with cursive) You are good at English, akere? It's written in English, but you don't tell anyone about this, do you hear me? I want you to read this letter for me.

MIDDLE AGED TSIETSI: *(To the audience)* I thought as much. So what were you expecting?

Lights out

(Mother appears to have been searching for Tsietsi. She watches him disdainfully as he approached the house)

MOTHER:

You went somewhere. People saw you coming out of Lebogang's and house eating something.

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

Eh! That's a lie from hell.

MOTHER:

So, it's a lie enh?

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

It's a lie.

MOTHER:

Tsietsi!

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

Ma

MOTHER:

What exactly were you doing in that woman's house?

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

I was reading

MOTHER:

Does she have a public library in her house?

(Suddenly Mother springs to action, Tsietsi makes to run, but was not fast enough for. She trips him, starts to beat him up as well as sits on him for maximum impact. Tsietsi yells out a loud cry)

Lights out

8TH MOVEMENT

(This scene opens with few couples gathered at Mother's bar (SIMUNYE GROOVE BAR) drinking away and making noise with loud music)

OLD TSIETSI:

When I was in grade seven our home changed. It became a bar. Mother became a queen of sorts. She made her own beer from *mabele*. Starting from five o'clock our home was a beehive. Men and women from every nook and cranny gathered to drink.

MIDDLE AGED TSIETSI:

As they imbibed their favourite drinks they made a lot of noise. You'd think their best football teams were playing.

(We see High School Tsietsi, in a corner, thoroughly disturbed as he tries to study)

MIDDLE AGED TSIETSI:

Many times I could not do my schoolwork properly. Plus, I witnessed a number of fights. Sometimes Mother would be one of the fighters. I remember one day Mother fighting with some woman. People said they fought because of a man. Mother was accused of trying to find a husband. Ah! Mother's tongue was a tongue of fire and steel.

MOTHER:

Look at your ugly face. What man would go for a warthog like you?

MIDDLE AGED TSIETSI:

I loved that one. It pushed my sense of humour to its remotest end.

LADY:

You're famous for taking other women's men, and now you want to put my Trevor in your tray? Listen, I might be a warthog, but Trevor saw me first. Shameless snail! Where were you when Trevor saw you?"

MOTHER:

Some women can't stop being grasshoppers. Look at her leg, so out of place.

(Suddenly Mother moves towards Lady and floors her. She climbed on her, but the woman was quite flexible, and quickly Mother went below. Cruel blows rained on Mother. The home team was in trouble. Somehow the men didn't want to separate them)

1ST DRUNK:

Let them fight, don't touch them, after that they'll respect each other.

2ND DRUNK:

Let them stretch their muscles, they are gyming. They want to lose weight. They need it.

(Mother rips off the woman's dress. The men cheered. Mother continued to rip off the woman's dress at the same time pouring punches on her)

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

I witnessed many fights. Some were nice to watch while others were horrible to even hear of. Mother fought with men, too. People in the village didn't like our house. But how else was mother going to make a living? She needed to feed us. She needed to buy us clothes. She needed to spoil us. She just wanted to be a real mother. Sometimes Mother's customers would give me their change. Sometimes, more like always, I'd steal money from these drinking banks. Talk about mini cash heists. A few times I saw Mother putting her hands into her half-dead customers and searching for money or other valuables. She'd take their rings, belts, watches, or shoes. It was a way of life that put life into us every coming day. Some of my teachers came to pass their time at our house. One of the teachers liked to speak English when he'd had enough alcohol running in his system. He liked boasting, too.

DRUNK TEACHER:

You know what, I might be black, but my mouth and tongue are as white as snow. I don't get tired of speaking the Queen's English as most people do. I buy roses in English. I dream romantic dreams not in Roman, but in English. My smile is English, so is my laugh. Listen my boy, education is the root of all good things. When you're truly educated, good things will follow you for the rest of your life. If you want to be poor, in all ways, and always, then deny yourself good education. Today I swim in the waters of good life because I went to school. I originate from a decadent family, perhaps more precarious and perilous than your family, but look at me now. My good English can make me an inhabitant of any place. With education you don't sleep with a depleted belly, but with a round belly that gleefully invites sweet dreams. Listen to me boy, education is like the Thames River in the heart of London, it never dries up. Leave school and you'll rot and stink like rubbish. Education gives you a balanced life.

OLD TSIETSI:

It felt like I was in class. I got a number of English words from him like: loquacious, inundate, a mere bagatelle, picturesque, repercussion, auscultation, and many others. He had a pocket dictionary. He said he'd learnt his English at the University of England in London. I later found out that the University of England does not even exist. I liked listening to my teacher, though. He would speak to me in English and that improved my use of the English language although when I spoke English my whole body seemed to tremble. Maybe I was caught in syntactic magic of ignorance. All the same, I had pedagogical advantage over my classmates. I would say proudly sometimes "a vacant stomach is antagonistic to a scholar," imitating my teacher.

MIDDLE AGED TSIETSI:

Although I went to school and played with other kids, something was troubling me all the time. Something was missing in my life. The thoughts of my unknown father came to me when other children reported what their fathers had bought them: bicycles, clothes, games, nice shoes and even watches.

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

I continued roasting and frying meat for the beer lovers who came to spend their money at our house. I wondered, sometimes, why people drank, because when they did their

behaviour changed for the worse. Someone who was calm and collected a minute ago, after gulps of beer, would become a difficult he-goat the next minute. And they'd be completely without any cloud of shame in their faces. For example, they'd go to the back of the house, undo their belts and become unwanted fire fighters. No grain of shame as they handle everything publicly.

(A drunk publicly removes his pant and while he is about to remove his boxers, the lights went off)

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

I wondered if he has family Did they have enough to eat? Look at him wasting away. Sometimes the wives or children of these men would come and carry their unconscious loved papas home. I saw one boy carrying his father home on the back like a bag of cement. I swore I would never drink and if I do, I would never get drunk. It doesn't make any sense at all.

A song is raised

Lights out

9TH MOVEMENT

OLD TSIETSI:

Time passed. A lot of people continued to frequent Simunye Groove Bar: policemen, construction workers, nurses, and others. The place was growing rapidly and because of her success we were envied. Mother always told me that success attracts evil people, and we were attracting our share of evil eyes.

(Presently, we see school girls arriving at the bar with their teachers)

OLD TSIETSI:

Teachers also came surrounded by girls, their learners. One of the girls who frequented Simunye Groove Bar was Ntswaki. Everybody in the class knew that Ntswaki passed her tests with perfect rainbow colours, not because she was exceptionally intelligent, but because of her life after the sun had gone down. I didn't like seeing young girls being turned into drunks and I even once spoke to Mother about it.

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

Mama, some of these girls are from my school. Is this not abuse?

MOTHER:

Politics and beer don't go together. If you want to be a politician go to where parliament meets. I have a business here to run and everyone except underage people is welcome.

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

But these are under aged. All of them, Mama.

MOTHER:

But I'm not going to go around asking for IDs. If a teacher brings his female learner, that's alright with me because I don't know them. I'm not going to be asking my customers 'Tell me about the woman who is hugging you, is she your wife, is she your this and that?' No. Come, pay, enjoy and go.

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

Mum, why don't we call this place Come, Pay and Go? That would be a nice name. I like it.

MOTHER:

Wena man, be serious. Why don't the girls themselves refuse? They have mouths. They like what's happening. I'm not here to play the role of mother to Tom, Dick and Harry, and Joyce. I'm a businesswoman. And one day you'll understand why a man sits near a woman. Let them bring money. In this business every mouth counts, every mouth is *tshete*.

(We see a number of community members passing by the bar and observing the students pitifully)

MIDDLE AGED TSIETSI:

The community saw what was happening but they sealed their mouths.

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI

My friend's girlfriend fell pregnant accidentally, but he was very excited about becoming a father. I asked him one day where he was going to get the money to maintain his new family.

FRIEND:

Welfare cares.

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

But the money welfare gives money is not even enough, how about the education of the child?

FRIEND:

My mother is there.

(The friend departs...only to reappear with a grave face in tears)

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

Rambutu, what happened? I heard about the birth of the baby. Congratulations! Are the child and mother okay?

(Friend continues to cry)

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

Rambo

FRIEND:

She's a witch! She's a witch, I'm telling you.

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

Who's a witch now, your mum? I'm sorry, who is this witch? I'm trying to make sense of the whole situation. Or your girlfriend run away?

FRIEND:

The baby is completely white.

Hai wena! What!!? Don't say that again to me. You bloody joker!

FRIEND:

The baby is white.

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:
So, what's going to happen?

FRIEND:
To who?

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:
To you all.

FRIEND:
What do you mean? I am not white, neither is she. How can I have a polar bear kid?

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:
Sorry my friend.

FRIEND:
But.....I bought her a gold ring, funky pairs of jeans, shoes, winter boots and a nice silver bangle. What do I do? Should I take them back?

A Song is raised

Lights out

10th MOVEMENT

OLD TSIETSI:

My relationship with my stepfather did not get take any better shape. And then this day came. It was about nine pm.

(We hear arguments from within the house)

MOTHER:

Pack your belongings and go. If you think the younger girl is better than me then why do you keep coming back here? I don't want to be second best. This is not a competition. Either I'm best or nothing. You are either here or there. Pack now and tomorrow early in the morning hit the road."

MAN:

So now that I have helped you make money and your feet are deep in the ground, you have the guts to kick me like a rubbish bag.

MOTHER:

It's over between you and me. I'm done. You made me suffer a lot. Enough is enough.

(Tsietsi responds from outside)

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

He made me suffer, too

MOTHER:

Tsietsi, I'll come and smash your head into pap.

MAN:

I want my *lobola* back.

MOTHER:

No problem, you'll get it back, but after that you'll give me that very money back to me because I had loaned you the cash and you haven't paid it back.

MAN:

I want my money back!

MOTHER:

You must be dreaming a bad dream. And you call yourself a man?

A Song is raised
Lights out

11TH MOVEMENT

MIDDLE AGED TSIETSI:

My restaurant business at Simunye Groove Bar continued, but problem was that many of my customers wanted to buy on credit but I did not have a record book, so I did not write the names of my debtors. One of the culprits was my own teacher. He kept on eating on credit and refused to pay. I told Mother about my problem.

MOTHER:

I will sort this out.

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

How are you going to sort it out?

MOTHER:

I will grab his neck, shake him up like a bottle of coke and let him spill out of his body.

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

But mum, you can't solve every problem using violence.

MOTHER:

Talking doesn't help much. You'll talk until your hair gets grey. God knows I've tried to talk to these people peacefully without lifting a finger, but all I get is empty words, empty promises. They'll all tell you tomorrow, tomorrow, and tomorrow never comes. What do you do? Even a judge will hit them on the head with his official club. Fight.

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

How do I say anything to my teacher, mum?

MOTHER:

When he's here he's no longer your teacher. He's just like any drunk. Here, you're the boss. At school he's the one who is boss. Be a boss, here, that's what you have to be. If he takes a piece of meat and throws it in his mouth, he has to pay for it. Do you think he can go to a restaurant in Polokwane, order something and walk out without paying? He can, but they'll put cuffs in his hands. Why then does he do that here? It's because you allow it. Why should he live off your sweat? You need to wake up, otherwise the train to riches will not open its doors for you.

MIDDLE AGED TSIETSI:

(Demonstrates kungfu fists against the air)

Mother was right, I thought. I imagined giving my teacher a smart header, a kick, a crunchy punch and him falling down, and again giving him a sweet hammer on the jaw, and another jab below the ribs. But then I thought: would that give me money? If I did that, the doors to riches would close and the doors to prison would open.

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

I'll see what I'll do.

MOTHER:

Be yourself, be a man. Do what men do.

A song is raised

Tsietsi goes inside and while he is away, his teacher comes in, pick a chicken and starts to eat)

MIDDLE AGED TSIETSI:

When I came back my dear teacher had a chicken breast in his hands.

TEACHER:

Tsietsi, your cooking has improved. Where did you learn the secrets of the kitchen?

MIDDLE AGED TSIETSI:

I knew those were nothing, but empty words. I needed school uniform, school materials, and roasting chicken was my way of making money to get such things. I didn't have a father to buy those things for me. I was trying to be a father to myself. Should I cry? Do men cry? I asked a voice within me. What should I do? I needed the answer quickly. My teacher threw one piece after the other in his wide mouth. This is how a shameless man attacks a business man. I needed to attack him, too, but how?

(Mother walks in)

TEACHER:

Madithunya, your son is multi-talented. He has the hand of a gold digger. I see a future of gold in front of him. I love him.

MOTHER:

No, you do not love him, you love his chicken. How come that you have been eating his chicken all these months without paying a cent? Now, before I do anything dirty and sinister, tell me how much you have so that you can pay my son back right now as we debate the issue.

MIDDLE AGED TSIETSI:

My teacher did not expect what he was hearing. He was standing in the grave that he himself had dug. He was in it. He swallowed the piece he was eating and I could see he had difficulty pushing it down his throat. Mother turned to me.

MOTHER:

How much money does he owe you?

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

Eight hundred.

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

I had added interest on the amount.

MOTHER:

Man, you come here and eat eight hundred rand under my roof for free? What kind of crocodile are you? Listen, South Africa is now free, but it doesn't mean that things are free. You work as a teacher and you get paid at the end of the month. My kid also works here and he expects his customers to pay him. Now, if people like you come here with your beards expecting free food, then I'm sorry, freedom is freedom, but chicken is not free.

TEACHER:

But I'm going to pay him.

MOTHER:

That's an empty song. When are you going to pay him? Months and months have passed now. Have you paid for the piece you're eating?

TEACHER:

No, I haven't, but I'll pay for it.

MOTHER:

Pay for the piece straight away, now.

TEACHER:

How much is it?

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

Thirty.

TEACHER:

What? This little nonsense is thirty? Am I being hijacked here or what?

MOTHER:

Hey, *wena!* put your hands in your pocket and give my boy the thirty rand.

(Teacher reaches out and handed a R50 NOTE)

MIDDLE AGED TSIETSI:

He gave me a fifty rand note.

TEACHER:

I want my change.

MOTHER:

What change? Now, you have seven hundred and fifty to pay. What change are you talking about? You are talking about minus twenty, which is still nothing. Let me tell you something, all the pieces you swallowed all these months, you're going to pay. If you don't pay then my name is not Madithunya. Things between you and me will turn very sour. I have dealt with people like you before. And listen, if I hear my child has failed in

your class, doors of hell will open. And, I want the remaining money to be paid at the end of the month. I'll come and talk to the principal of your school and we'll arrange how you're going to pay.

(She warns everybody)

MOTHER:

I don't want to see people eating chicken without paying today.

(His friend points at the meat the teacher had left)

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

Eat it! It has been paid for already.

FRIEND:

I like your mother, man. She's so straightforward. She has the blood of a man.

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

Actually, she's both father and mother.

A song is raised
Lights out

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

I used to receive love letters from girls, but I would ignore them. One girl knew I liked poetry. She wrote me a heart-gripping poem, which she entitled *Handsome*. I wish I could easily fall in love with a girl but then, ironically, I still did not want any of that. A number of learners had boyfriends and girlfriends, but I was only a spectator. I did not want to be a teenage father. My own life was being taken care of by a single mother; how could I, then, support an ever crying mouth, plus a nagging woman? Double trouble! I saw first-hand, how Mother was struggling to keep all of us at home fed, clothed and educated. It was not easy. My motto was "one life, one goal". And the goal was to pass my matric very well, and go to university. And, there was also the scare of HIV/AIDS. That was always at the back of my head. I loved life. I told myself sex was worth waiting for. I did not want to mess up my life. I wanted to live a fulfilling life. With the discovery of poetry I extended my love to rocks, flowers, trees, ants, colors, the sun, the moon and the stars, the valleys and hills. I wrote just about everything, with love. At some point I was a bad boy, I admit. I knew nothing, but to play dangerous games and to hurt others, old or young. I treated girls badly and I didn't show respect to my teachers. But now I was a new person. I could see beyond the clouds of poverty. I could see beauty beyond the hills of poetry. It was one teacher who called me to the staff room one day, and spoke to me for a long time about my life, and how I could change it for the better. And, it changed.

A song is raised
Lights out

12TH MOVEMENT

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

Before the school closed for December holidays, the school received unexpected visitors, the police.

(Students of high school liter the stage at break time. The police appear and get everyone into a panic. The police make for the Principal's office. Thereafter, the scene on the right presents Teacher making out with four students one after the other. Each of the learners appears on the other side of the enclave with protruding tummies. Shortly after we see Teacher, handcuffed by the Police as they take him away from the school)

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

They handcuffed the guilty teacher and threw him into one of their ever dark vans.

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

The teacher had made four girls pregnant, and one of them was a fourteen-year-old girl.

(As he was taken away learners shouted, "Give him life in jail!" "Don't bring him back!" "He's a thief of hearts!" "He's a teacher with three eyes!" "He has the wrong eyes! "We want teachers, not lovers and loafers"!)

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

We didn't see him again. He was given thirty years in jail. We heard what the judge had said to him:

(Court scene)

JUDGE:

You're a bad seed that unfortunately fell on good soil. You only cared about your selfish, lustful drives and you didn't give a thought about the welfare of your learners and the good name of your community and school. You're a loose bull who needs to be tied to a concrete pillar for many ungreen seasons.

OLD TSIETSI:

That incident, like the other before it, made male teachers respect girls. It made them see girls not as possible lovers, but possible politicians, engineers, doctors, and business women. After that, the principal organized a day that he called Family Day. Classes stopped that day. We gathered in the main hall. A number of people were brought from the community. Some were old and we wondered why old people would want to visit a school.

(We see the learners gathered together again)

PRINCIPAL:

Learners! Learners! I have brought you here today some of our parents. I invited them here so that they can talk to us about family life and family values. This is not a political meeting, but a life skills lesson. We know that these days, teen pregnancy is a problem. We need to combat this problem together. Today, we'll hear from some of our parents how they lived in those fine years, and what made them be disciplined. Please, listen

carefully to them. I've brought here six couples and all of them have beautiful family stories to share with us.

(The first woman took to the floor)

FIRST WOMAN:

Do you know how many years I've been with this man?

(She said pointing to her husband. Students shout: "One year!", "Five!" "Ten!", "One month!" "One day!" When the noise had died down she announced with a face glittering with pride)

FIRST WOMAN:

He's been in my caring hands for good and productive twenty-five years.

(One learner shouted, "All those years with only one person?" We all laughed animatedly)

FIRST WOMAN:

A family has to stick together. From the first day **lobola** is paid to the last day, which is death. These days, the last day is divorce day. Now, that's wrong. Marriage has to last. If you don't want marriage to last, then don't get married. Today you hear that so and so got married. After a year you hear that he left his wife and he has taken another wife. After two years he leaves that wife and takes another one. And he marries again. Tell me, where's the family? Even **dinku** (sheep) live together under one roof. And in our days," she continued, "we knew how to wait until we got married. These days, people do not wait. Why can't you wait? You all know about health problems these days that come with this rush to nowhere. Please wait; wait for you to have a proper family.

SECOND WOMAN:

I am sure the question you have for me is how I've managed to live with *ntate* TauKobong for such a long time

(A learner shouts "the Lion in the blanket. Everyone laughs and scream "Yeeeeesss)

SECOND WOMAN:

Only five things, she said, waving five fingers in the air. The big five are: love, respect, patience, commitment, and communication.

GIRL:

And lies.

(Everyone laughs)

SECOND WOMAN:

These have been the pillars of our marriage since the day we started living together as husband and wife.

THIRD WOMAN:

Because of those five things, *ntate* Roland has never lifted his hand to beat me. And, when I see *ntate* him every day, I love him more. In our house, love gets sweeter every day.

(Everybody clap their hands)

THIRD WOMAN:

I have no scar on my body to remind me of his anger. I'm not saying that he does not get angry, he does, he's a human being, but he gets angry wisely because he has learnt to be patient and loving. Because he respects me, he gets angry in a respectful way. Because he respects me, we communicate and quickly we solve our problems. We're committed to each other. Remember, these five commandments and condiments of marriage and family life. One day you will need them.

FOURTH WOMAN:

Nowadays people think that money can buy love. Nothing but a good heart wins love. You can have all the money in the world, but if long thorns are sticking out of your heart, who will touch the centre of your heart? Love has to come from the heart. Don't see a good car and fall in love with the owner of the car. That's not love. That's foolish dreaming. And I have to tell every girl here, never be lured by money. Never be lured by material things. Be careful and watch your steps as you walk. Follow the right path. Life is a game, some say, but for God's sake don't be a ball. And you boys, your hands are not for punching girls. When you're married remember beating your wife is beating your mother. And don't love the bottle more than your wife.

Lights out

13TH MOVEMENT

MOTHER:

Tsietsi, you know that some of my customers are teachers and almost all of them advise me to go back to school. I'm sure they see something in me which I don't see. Do you see anything?

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

Anything like what?

MOTHER:

This school thing. Do you see school in my face?

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

Mum, there's no picture of a school in your face. I see nothing. How about your business? Don't you want to be a business woman anymore?

MOTHER:

They say there's no future in being a shebeen queen. I don't want to continue being a queen of misery.

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

But you get money.

MOTHER:

Yes, I do get money, but how much money do I make really? When are we going to live a life, a good life without wrestling with some of the gorillas who come here?

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

But mum, there are no schools for adults in this village, how are you going to do it?

MOTHER:

Well, I'll have to study with the children. All I want is an education.

HIGH SCHOOL TSIETSI:

Mum, imagine yourself in a uniform running in the school yard. Do you want the children to tease me?

MOTHER:

Tsietsi, it is not about teasing, teasing is not important. All I want is to further myself. I want to be a better person. For how long will I be here listening to foolish talk and insults from drunks? Whoever does not go to school becomes a fool. I want to go to school.

OLD TSIETSI:

Time for going to university came. I went to a university which was not far from home. I chose not to be a boarder so that I could help Mother in the evenings with the shop and also her schoolwork. The drinking place was no more. Her customers were not happy. Some of the villagers saw her as a mad woman. They couldn't understand how a normal person could choose to throw away a thriving business and to go to school and read

folktales with children. Mother would wake up very early in the morning, cook, and prepare breakfast. After that she'd go to school. She was told she was told she didn't have to wear school uniform. Perhaps one reason was that she was going to find it difficult to get her size! At first the children laughed at her, but later they got used to seeing one of their mothers sharing a classroom with them. She wanted a better life for herself and her children. Grandfather could not provide it for her, nor did her men, including my runaway father. Mother continued with her studies. She did well and she was confident she was going to attain her goal. As for me, the second semester was better than the first one. My marks were better and I could understand my lecturers' accents. I was getting used to the style of teaching and speaking. The year passed. I passed. Mother passed, so did my brothers. Our house was a house of successful learners.

(We see Mother and High School Tsietsi in graduation garments and jubilating)

(A song is raised)

END